



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



Black History Month: Resources Aligned with the Common Core State Standards

Grades K-1

Martin's Big Words, The Life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Author: Doreen Rappaport

Lexile: 410

About the Book: This picture-book biography is an excellent and accessible introduction for young readers to learn about one of the world's most influential leaders, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Doreen Rappaport weaves the immortal words of Dr. King into a captivating narrative to tell the story of his life. With stunning art by acclaimed illustrator Bryan Collier, *Martin's Big Words* is an unforgettable portrait of a man whose dream changed America-and the world forever.

Jazz Age Josephine: Dancer, singer--who's that, who? Why, that's MISS Josephine Baker, to you!

Author: Jonah Winter

About the Book: From bestselling children's biographer Jonah Winter and two-time Caldecott Honoree Marjorie Priceman comes a story of a woman the stage could barely contain. Rising from a poor, segregated upbringing, Josephine Baker was able to break through racial barriers with her own sense of flair and astonishing dance abilities. She was a pillar of steel with a heart of gold—all wrapped up in feathers, sequins, and an infectious rhythm.

CCSS tip: After reading the story aloud, generate a list of questions students have about Baker's life, as revealed in the words and

images. This list can form the basis of a mini inquiry unit, with the students' questions as the driving force.

Our Children Can Soar: A Celebration of Rosa, Barack, and the Pioneers of Change

Author: Michelle Cook

About the Book: This unique picture book is part history, part poetry, and entirely inspirational. It takes the reader step by simple step through the cumulative story of the US Civil Rights Movement, showing how select pioneers' achievements led up to the landmark moment when we elected our first black president. Each historical figure is rendered by a different award-winning illustrator, highlighting the singular and vibrant contribution that each figure made.

CCSS tip: (RI.1.1. Ask and answer questions about key details in a text.) In this book, each page depicts a different important historical figure without offering much biographical detail. Phrases such as "Jesse sprinted, so Rosa could sit" will automatically generate the most basic questions: "Who was Jesse?" or "How does sitting help people?" Use these questions as a way to introduce these important historical figures.

Grades 2-3

Martin Luther King, Jr. and the March on Washington

Author: Frances E. Ruffin

Lexile: 480

About the Book: On August 28, 1963, more than 250,000 people came to the nation's

capital. They came by plane, by bus, by car — even on roller-skates — to speak out against segregation and to demand equal rights for everyone. They also came to hear the words of a very special leader, Martin Luther King, Jr. Told with a wonderful immediacy, this book captures the spirit of this landmark day in American history and brings Dr. King's "I Have a Dream" speech to vivid life for young children.

CCSS Focus: RI.3.10. By the end of the year, read and comprehend informational texts, including history/social studies, science, and technical texts, at the high end of the grades 2–3 text complexity band independently and proficiently.

Rosa

Author: Nikki Giovanni

Lexile: 900

About the Book: Fifty years after her refusal to give up her seat on a Montgomery, Alabama, city bus, Mrs. Rosa Parks is still one of the most important figures in the American civil rights movement. This tribute to Mrs. Parks is a celebration of her courageous action and the events that followed.

Award-winning poet, writer, and activist Nikki Giovanni's evocative text combines with Bryan Collier's striking cut-paper images to retell the story of this historic event from a wholly unique and original perspective.

CCSS Focus: RI.4.2. Determine the main idea of a text and explain how it is supported by key details; summarize the text.

Wilma Unlimited: How Wilma Rudolph Became the World's Fastest Woman

Author: Kathleen Krull

Lexile: 730

About the Book: Before Wilma Rudolph was five years old, polio had paralyzed her left leg. Everyone said she would never walk again. But Wilma refused to believe it. Not only would she walk again, she vowed, she'd run. And she did run—all the way to the Olympics, where she became the first American woman to earn three gold medals in a single Olympiad. This dramatic and inspiring true

story is illustrated in bold watercolor and acrylic paintings by Caldecott Medal-winning artist David Diaz.

Freedom on the Menu: The Greensboro Sit-Ins

Author: Carole Boston Weatherford

Lexile: 660

About the Book: There were signs all throughout town telling eight-year-old Connie where she could and could not go. But when Connie sees four young men take a stand for equal rights at a Woolworth's lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina, she realizes that things may soon change. This event sparks a movement throughout her town and region. And while Connie is too young to march or give a speech, she helps her brother and sister make signs for the cause. Changes are coming to Connie's town, but Connie just wants to sit at the lunch counter and eat a banana split like everyone else.

Ron's Big Mission

Author: Rose Blue

Lexile: 440

About the Book: In this story based on an incident from the life of astronaut Ron McNair, nine-year-old Ron walks into his local public library with a mission—to secure a library card for himself so that he can take books home to read. Because it's 1959 and segregation laws prohibit African Americans from borrowing books, Ron is at first declined. The police arrive, but Ron refuses to be deterred; finally the head librarian agrees to bend the rules—Ron is her best patron, after all—and a very happy Ron leaves, books in hand. Based on interviews with Ron's mother and a South Carolinian librarian, the story emphasizes McNair's focus and determination to succeed, even if it means pointing out injustices along the way.

CCSS Focus: RI.3.3. Describe the relationship between a series of historical events, scientific ideas or concepts, or steps in technical procedures in a text, using language that pertains to time, sequence, and cause/effect.
RL.3.3. Describe characters in a story (e.g., their traits, motivations, or feelings) and explain how

their actions contribute to the sequence of events.

Sojourner Truth's Step-Stomp Stride

Author: Andrea Davis Pinkney

About the Book: Born into slavery, Belle had to endure the cruelty of several masters before she escaped to freedom. But she knew she wouldn't really be free unless she was helping to end injustice. That's when she changed her name to Sojourner and began traveling across the country, demanding equal rights for black people and for women. Many people weren't ready for her message, but Sojourner was brave, and her truth was powerful. And slowly, but surely as Sojourner's step-stomp stride, America began to change.

CCSS tip: This biographical title is written as a fictional story, and students will naturally want to ask, "Is this real?" Read the story aloud and record the students' questions. Then look at the appended page of factual information, and see if students can discover the answers to their own questions.

Online Resources

ReadWorks provides over 1,800 K-8 non-fiction and literary reading passages, each with a research-based question set to support student comprehension. This is a free resource bank that contains over a dozen passages based on Famous African Americans with texts at a Lexile level ranging from 510L – 680L. Below are links to just a few representative samples.

<http://www.readworks.org/passages/famous-african-americans-adam-clayton-powell-jr>

<http://www.readworks.org/passages/famous-african-americans-duke-ellington>

<http://www.readworks.org/passages/famous-african-americans-oprah-winfrey>

<http://www.readworks.org/passages/famous-african-americans-sojourner-truth>

<http://www.readworks.org/passages/famous-african-americans-sojourner-truth>

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The Crafting Freedom Website

(<http://www.craftingfreedom.org/>) provides

educators with a user-friendly resource on the

African-American experience during the era of

slavery. Here you will find ready-to-use lesson

plans, videos, PDF slide shows, teacher tools,

and student handouts that are broken down into grade bands for Grades 3-5 and 6-8.

Grades 4-5

Through My Eyes

Author: Ruby Bridges

Lexile: 860

About the Book: In November 1960, all of America watched as a tiny six-year-old black girl, surrounded by federal marshals, walked through a mob of screaming segregationists and into her school. An icon of the civil rights movement, Ruby Bridges chronicles each dramatic step of this pivotal event in history.

When Marian Sang: The True Recital of Marian Anderson, The Voice of the Century

Author: Pam Muñoz Ryan

Lexile: 780

About the Book: Most people know of Marian Anderson from her historic concert on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in 1939, which drew an integrated crowd of 75,000 people in pre-Civil Rights America. While this momentous event showcased the uniqueness of her voice, the strength of her character, and the struggles of the times in which she lived, it is only part of her story.

The Great Migration: Journey to the North Hardcover

Author: Eloise Greenfield

Lexile: 770

About the Book: In this collection of poems and collage artwork, award winners Eloise Greenfield and Jan Spivey Gilchrist gracefully depict the experiences of families like their own, who found the courage to leave their homes behind and make new lives for themselves elsewhere.

CCSS tip: (RI.4.1. Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.) Poetry lends itself wonderfully to looking deeply into the meaning behind each word an author chooses. Working in small groups, students could each read a poem in this

moving picture-book anthology and document in some way—drawing pictures, recording their voices, or writing in journals—what they feel when they read the poems. Follow this exercise by having the students explain the specific words from the poems that made them feel that way and why.

Heart and Soul: The Story of America and African Americans

Author: Kadir Nelson

Lexile: 1050

About the Book: The story of America and African-Americans is a story of hope and inspiration and unwavering courage. This is the story of the men, women, and children who toiled in the hot sun picking cotton for their masters; it's about the America ripped in two by Jim Crow laws; it's about the brothers and sisters of all colors who rallied against those who would dare bar a child from an education. It's a story of discrimination and broken promises, determination, and triumphs.

CCSS tip: This exceptional book does just what its title states: it offers a powerful survey of American and African American history. Students could read the book's stories along with primary-source documents, such as the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights, to determine how our nations' laws have affected African Americans at the different points described in Nelson's book.

Online Resources

A great resource in order to provide an opportunity for students to practice a suite of reading comprehension skills to master more complex long format reading material is www.readworks.org. ReadWorks provides free research-based units, lessons, and authentic, leveled non-fiction and literary passages. The ReadWorks curriculum is aligned to the Common Core State Standards and is faithful to the most effective research-proven instructional practices in reading comprehension.

Highlighted Lessons

A set of novel study units feature the books **The Story of Jackie Robinson: Bravest Man in Baseball** by Margaret Davidson (760L), **The Watsons Go to Birmingham – 1963** by Christopher Paul Curtis (1000L) and **Words with Wings: A Treasury of African-American Poetry and Art** by Belinda Rochelle. Concepts addressed in lessons include Author's Purpose, Figurative Language, Text Features, Theme, Drawing Conclusions, and Vocabulary. Teachers are provided detailed lesson plans that contain Teacher Modeling, Guided Practice, Independent Practice and Reflective Practice, as well as supporting texts/materials and standards alignment.

<http://www.readworks.org/lessons/grade5/story-jackie-robinson-bravest-man-baseball>

<http://www.readworks.org/lessons/grade5/watsonsgo-birmingham%E2%80%991963>

<http://www.readworks.org/lessons/grade5/words-wings-treasury-african-american-poetry-and-art>

Scholastic also has a dedicated Resource page to Celebrate African American Heritage. <http://teacher.scholastic.com/africanamericanheritage/> This rich collection of teaching resources covers a lot of ground, including The Civil Rights Movement, African American contributions to the arts, and slavery in America. Each topic is covered with lesson plans, multimedia, and reading lists.

The Crafting Freedom Website (<http://www.craftingfreedom.org/>) provides educators with a user-friendly resource on the African-American experience during the era of slavery. Here you will find ready-to-use lesson plans, videos, PDF slide shows, teacher tools, and student handouts that are broken down into grade bands for Grades 3-5 and 6-8.

Grades 6-8

Freedom Walkers: The Story of the Montgomery Bus Boycott

Author: Russell Freedman

Lexile: 1110

About the Book: When Rosa Parks quietly refused to give up her bus seat to a white man, the Montgomery bus boycott was sparked. That yearlong struggle eventually ended bus segregation and contributed to the civil rights movement. Key personalities and events are related in a compelling way in this very informative book.

Marching For Freedom: Walk Together, Children, and Don't You Grow Weary

Author: Elizabeth Partridge

Lexile: 960

About the Book: It was not that long ago that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., led the fight for civil rights, including voting rights, for African Americans. Ground zero for the movement became Selma, Alabama. Now award-winning author Elizabeth Partridge leads middle-grade readers straight into the chaotic, passionate, and deadly three months of protests that culminated in the landmark civil rights march from Selma to Montgomery in 1965. Focusing on the courageous children who faced terrifying violence in order to protest alongside Dr. King, this inspiring book is enhanced by stunningly emotional black-and-white photos.

CCSS tip: (RI.6.1. Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.) *This book is broken up into chapters that each represent an important day or days in 1965. Organize students into small groups, and assign each group a chapter in Partridge's title. Then have students work together to pull out phrases or words from the text that best illustrate why the days highlighted in the chapter were so important to the civil rights movement.*

Portraits of African-American Heroes

Author: Tonya Bolden

Lexile: 1140

About the Book: A stunningly beautiful book consisting of portraits - in pictures and words - of twenty outstanding African-Americans. The individuals range from historical to contemporary figures, such as the dancer Judith Jamison, and represent diverse fields of endeavor, from the law (Supreme Court justice Thurgood Marshall) to athletics, science, and more. For each individual, there is a three-page biography by the noted author Tonya Bolden and a striking black-and-white portrait.

The Day Martin Luther King, Jr. was Shot: A Photo History of the Civil Rights Movement

Author: Jim Haskins

Lexile: 1140

About the Book: Combining clear text with fascinating archival black-and-white photographs, acclaimed author Haskins illuminates the history of the Civil Rights Movement for young readers. His account begins long before the infamous day of the title, explaining that from the earliest days of the slave trade, African Americans have struggled for their freedom. By focusing on the individuals, both black and white, who worked bravely to achieve equal rights, Haskins draws children into the heart of the fight at every stage. Among those profiled are early abolitionists, the students who integrated Little Rock's Central High School in 1957, the participants at the lunch counter sit-in in Greensboro in 1960, the civil rights workers who were murdered in Mississippi in 1964, and of course Martin Luther King Jr. himself.

Little Rock Girl 1957: How a Photograph Changed the Fight for Integration

Author: Shelley Tougas

Lexile: 1010

About the Book: The Captured History series poses the question Can a photograph change the world? The answer, as explained by these two outstanding volumes, is a resounding yes.

Looking at an iconic image through the lens of history, culture, and media, the series gives readers a complete overview of how pictures can change perceptions. *Little Rock Girl* 1957 begins with the cover photograph of Elizabeth Eckford, an African American student trying to make her way into Little Rock High School. Right behind, her face contorted with anger, is a white student, Hazel Bryan. This photo, one of the most famous of the civil rights era, is a perfect point to begin a study of race relations, school integration, and, on a more personal level, the effect that picture had on both women.

CCSS tip: (RI.6.1. Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.) *This book is filled with images that evoke palpable, immediate emotions. Have students first look at the images and record or discuss the words and feelings that come to mind right away. Then have students read the text related to that image and discuss or write about what they feel. Finally, ask students to return to the text and pick out the specific words that evoked those feelings for them.*

Online Resources

The National Endowment for the Humanities has a wonderful collection of NEH-supported websites and EDSITEment-developed lessons that tell the four-hundred-year story of African- Americans. Follow the link <http://edsitement.neh.gov/feature/edsitement-s-guide-black-history-month-teaching-resources> to some of the best resources for telling the story of African Americans as well as some of the most influential voices and the most memorable images from that history, literature and culture.

Highlighted lessons

<http://edsitement.neh.gov/lesson-plan/jacob-lawrences-migration-series-removing-mask#sect-thelesson>

In this lesson, students describe and analyze [Jacob Lawrence's](#) *The Migration of the Negro* Panel no. 57 (1940-41), Helene Johnson's Harlem Renaissance poem "[Sonnet to a Negro in Harlem](#)" (1927), and Paul Laurence Dunbar's late-nineteenth-century poem "[We Wear the Mask](#)" (1896). Focusing on composition,

image, setting, characterization, and tone, students are invited to compare and contrast the works while considering how each work represents the life and changing roles of African Americans from the late nineteenth century to the Harlem Renaissance and The Great Migration. Dunbar's symbol of the mask can help guide students' understanding of these changing roles.

<http://edsitement.neh.gov/lesson-plan/poets-voice-langston-hughes-and-you>

Through this lesson, students explore what is meant by voice in poetry, and what qualities have made the voice of Langston Hughes a favorite for so many people.

Five journal entries and accompanying class discussions guide students in developing a general definition of voice in poetry, and in analyzing and appreciating the poetic voice of Langston Hughes in particular. These writing and discussion activities culminate in a writing assignment in which students either write a poem expressing their own voice (as developed in their journals), or write about one of the qualities of Langston Hughes's poetic voice (as explored in class discussion).

A great resource in order to provide an opportunity for students to practice a suite of reading comprehension skills to master more complex long format reading material is www.readworks.org. ReadWorks provides free research-based units, lessons, and authentic, leveled non-fiction and literary passages. The ReadWorks curriculum is aligned to the Common Core State Standards and is faithful to the most effective research-proven instructional practices in reading comprehension. The unit on the novel ***Rosa Parks: My Story*** by Rosa Parks with Jim Haskins (970L) focuses on the skills of the author's purpose, fact and opinion, and main idea. Teachers are provided detailed lesson plans that contain Teacher Modeling, Guided Practice, Independent Practice and Reflective Practice, as well as supporting texts/materials and standards alignment.

<http://www.readworks.org/lessons/grade6/rosa-parks-my-story>

Achieve the Core provides Common Core-aligned sample lessons with explanations and

supporting resources. This lesson on the text ***Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*** by Frederick Douglass is an exemplar close reading lesson for Grade 8. This lesson provides materials, text dependent questions, student discussion activities, and writing-based formative assessments.

<http://www.achievethecore.org/page/32/narrative-of-the-life-of-frederick-douglass-by-frederick-douglass>

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Grades 9-10

Malcolm X: By Any Means Necessary

Author: Walter Dean Myers

Lexile: 1050

About the Book: Myers chronicles the path of Malcolm's life, from his 1925 birth in Omaha to his assassination in Harlem 40 years later. Seamlessly fusing historical notes on the era with the activist's story, Myers tells of Malcolm's childhood, which was greatly influenced by his father, a disciple of Marcus Garvey; his life as a youth on the streets of Harlem and Boston, where he was convicted of burglary; his self-education while imprisoned for more than six years; his crucial role in and eventual split from the Nation of Islam; and his pilgrimage to Mecca, which inspired his Organization of Afro-American Unity, established "to unify Africans on an

international basis." The inclusion of quotations from Malcolm X's eloquent autobiography brings an added dimension to Myers's account and successfully rounds out this carefully researched portrait of a deeply devoted individual.

We've Got a Job: The 1963 Birmingham Children's March

Author: Cynthia Levinson

Lexile: 1020

About the Book: *We've Got a Job* tells the little-known story of the 4,000 black elementary-, middle-, and high school students who voluntarily went to jail in Birmingham, Alabama, between May 2 and May 11, 1963. Fulfilling Mahatma Gandhi's and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s precept to fill the jails, they succeeded where adults had failed in desegregating one of the most racially violent cities in America. Focusing on four of the original participants who have participated in extensive interviews, *We've Got a Job* recounts the astonishing events before, during, and after the Children's March.

Online Resources

The Learning Network provides teaching and learning materials and ideas based on [New York Times](#) content. In recognition of Black History Month, here is a collection of New York Times and Learning Network materials for teaching and learning about African American history. Of particular note are the historical front pages and accompanying lesson plans.

http://learning.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/02/01/celebrate-black-history-month/?_r=0

Grades 11 - CCR

Students on Strike: Jim Crow, Civil Rights, Brown, and Me

Author: John A. Stokes

Lexile: 1030

About the Book: *Students on Strike* is an evocative first-person narrative from a period of radical change in American history. Stokes recounts the planning of the student walkout, the secret meetings, the plot to send the principal on a wild goose chase after "truant"

students, and the strategy to boycott classes until conditions improved. The author recalls the challenges in persuading teachers and parents to support the strike, and the intimidation that came in the form of threats and a cross-burning on school grounds. Archival illustrations from Stokes' scrapbook add to the emotional impact of his story. The narrative follows the course of the lawsuits filed by the NAACP, which would become part of the historic *Brown v Board of Education* ruling of the U.S. Supreme Court and the subsequent end to segregation in America.

Twelve Years a Slave: Narrative of Solomon Northup

Author: Solomon Northup

About the Book: Northup's only written work is his autobiography. Northup's slave narrative, the tale of a free African American man who is kidnapped, sold into slavery, and lives as a slave for twelve years, was not only a best seller for its genre and time, it was revolutionary. *Twelve Years a Slave* is praised for its meticulous examination of slavery and plantation society, especially against the contrast to his previous life as a musician and citizen of New York. Northup's story has also been cited as representative of slavery's horrors and has been used to support the depictions in Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

CCSS Focus: RI.9-10.6. Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how an author uses rhetoric to advance that point of view or purpose

Crusaders in the Courts: Legal Battles of the Civil Rights Movement

Author: Jack Greenberg

About the Book: Jack Greenberg, a key figure at the NAACP Legal Defense Fund for 35 years, offers a personal memoir and behind the scenes view of the legal battles of the civil rights movement culminating in the landmark trial and decision, *Brown v. Board of Education*; the defense of Martin Luther King Jr., the origin of major employment discrimination cases.

Online Resources

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Please note: All books are widely available through multiple vendors, including Scholastic and Amazon.

When available, the Lexile level has been provided for text resources. Please refer to the Lexile Framework for Reading and/or Appendix A of the CCSS for more information.

For Dos and Don'ts of teaching Black History, please refer to the Teaching Tolerance website:

<http://www.tolerance.org/activity/dos-and-donts-teaching-black-history>

Compiled by:

Jennifer Webb

English Language Arts Education Consultant
Connecticut State Department of Education

Jennifer.webb@ct.gov

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**CONNECTICUT STATE
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